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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000955

SIPDIS

AF/PD FOR COX AND ROBERTSON, AF/S FOR KRAFT AND SCHLACHTER,  
AF/RA FOR SWANN, INR/R/MR, NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ZI](#) [PREL](#) [PHUM](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REPORT ZIM TURNS 22; HARARE

1. Editorials published in the April 18 and 19 editions of the mainstream newspapers concentrate on Zimbabwe's 22nd anniversary. Editorial excerpts:

2. Under headline "Spirit of togetherness is heartening," the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (04/19) comments:

"The turnout at yesterday's independence celebrations throughout the country is a clear affirmation of President Mugabe's leadership. Thousands of Zimbabweans from both the ruling ZANU PF and opposition MDC turned out to hear President Mugabe's independence message. For the first time in over two years, the MDC joined hands with other Zimbabweans to commemorate the country's 22 years of independence. . . This show of unity was in keeping with President Mugabe's call for all Zimbabweans to cast their political, religious, ethnic or cultural differences aside and concentrate on nation building. Zimbabweans have been waiting for a long time to see this kind of political maturity displayed as it sends the right signals to the outside world that, despite our political differences, we are one nation. The celebration of this Independence Day by all nationals should signify a new thinking and unity of purpose. It is an affirmation of the country's sovereignty and will send an unambiguous message to the country's detractors that were bent on dividing the nation and re-colonizing us. We expect the entire country to rally behind its leaders in charting a new course for the revival of the economy. . . The independence celebrations have started the ball rolling and political leaders should now tone down inflammatory statements that don't build the nation but distract attention from the real development needs of the people. . . We also commend the leader of the MDC, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai, for urging his supporters to attend the independence celebrations. . . This gesture is a good sign for the future and will mean that the opposition can now be part and parcel of the various national processes of the country. . . A new chapter was opened. . . and hopefully there will be no one to spoil this new spirit of togetherness as we join hands to build a new, revitalized Zimbabwe."

3. Under headline "Journey without maps," the independent weekly "The Financial Gazette" (04/18) comments:

". . . But for all the seemingly business-as-usual attitude adopted by Zimbabwe's leaders in the face of widening international condemnation and isolation, it is clear that the sanctions are beginning to have a telling and that Mugabe and his officials are deeply worried about the road ahead. Nothing bears out the government's worry more than its rabid response to the sanctions because, if they were of no effect at all, none of its members would bother even to respond. And yet despite this realization, Harare somehow seems to think that it has the wherewithal to ride over the storm of its isolation, in the same manner as former Rhodesian premier Ian Smith hoped he would do in the turbulent 1960s and 1970s. As Smith now knows only too well, a vain attempt to defy the world over a clear injustice has its price, and Rhodesia and Smith himself eventually learnt this lesson to their grief. It won't be different now for Mugabe. . . As Zimbabwe today marks its 22 years of independence, is it not an irony that the country is once again under international sanctions for government-sponsored anarchy, as it was for several years up to 1980? Instead of withdrawing into a cul-de-sac and hoping that normalcy will eventually return to Zimbabwe, Mugabe and his advisers must get real and do so quickly. They need to acknowledge the deep-seated grievances that their actions have caused and correct these before it is too late. Not even the half-backed economic reforms led by agriculture, which the government is toying around with, will ever work in a climate of mayhem and international sanctions. The alternative to doing the right thing now is clear: Mugabe and his government will face the same ignominious exit as Smith did. It could even be worse."

14. Under headline "Marking final victory over the colonial yoke," the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (04/18) ran the following comment on page one:

"Although battered and bruised, Zimbabweans today celebrate the final victory against the yoke of colonialism and can now stand proud and tall as a truly independent African nation. . .Despite 22 years of independence, the ghost of colonialism was still haunting the country and this spook was finally exorcised in the March 9-11 presidential poll. The country has now truly come of age and will have to learn to stand on its own feet. The sanctions that are being applied against Zimbabwe by mostly European countries and the U. S. remove the safety guards the country needed in its early years of independence. While most urbanites are reasonably concerned and scared at the prospect of going it alone, we need to assure them that this is the perfect opportunity for the country to dig deep within itself and develop a truly Zimbabwean economy that is owned and driven by its own people. The sanctions are indeed a blessing in disguise as they serve as a test among ourselves to see whether we qualify to be independent or not. We have had 22 years to learn the ropes of governance and business, it is now time we started fending for ourselves. . . ."

15. Under headline "Little cause for cheer on Independence Day," the independent daily "The Daily News" (04/18) comments:

"Today, the government will reflect on its 22-year rule. It would like everyone to believe that its achievements are unparalleled, but that is not entirely true. Its gains were during the first decade of independence and were in the areas of education and health. However, since the 1990s, there was a rapid erosion of those gains that the losses now seem to outweigh the achievements. . .Lest the people are bamboozled, those attending the Independence celebrations today need to see beyond the rhetoric and identify who is to blame for the sorry state Zimbabwe finds itself in."

WHITEHEAD